

EMILY BRIGHT: An effort is underway to redistribute \$500,000 of funds raised following the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020. Black Visions, working in partnership with Headwaters Foundation for Justice, says the goal is to provide immediate cash relief to Black Minnesotans facing hardship. Individuals can apply for one-time funding of \$1,500, \$2,000, or \$5,000. Black Visions formed in August of 2017 and was at the center of an effort to replace the Minneapolis Police Department in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

Tiffany Dykes joins me now to tell me more about the fund. She is the director of development at Black Visions. Hello, Tiffany.

TIFFANY Hi, Emily. Thanks for having me.

DYKES:

EMILY BRIGHT: Thank you for being here. So some people might be surprised to hear that this money that Black Visions received is from more than five years ago. So what led you to redistribute these funds now?

TIFFANY Yeah. So we have always planned to redistribute these funds, and that's been happening in different ways over the course of the last few years. So we had previously distributed-- we've distributed approximately a little over \$9 million so far since we received that money. And so this was just part of the plan. It just so happened at a time where we feel like folks needed the most. So really excited to get these dollars into the hands of folks who are experiencing economic hardship.

EMILY BRIGHT: Yeah. Let's talk about that. Talk about this moment and why it feels important to distribute some of those funds right now.

TIFFANY Yeah. So as I mentioned, we were already planning to do this. But in the wake of the Operation Metro Surge and so many folks being impacted just by the current economy and experiencing hardship, regardless of--
DYKES: experiencing hardship as working class folks specifically, it just kind of landed at the right time.

And so for us, we wanted to make sure that this process was as accessible as possible, so that we're reaching not just Black folks, but Black folks that hold other marginalized identities. So like our immigrant neighbors, folks who are undocumented, folks who have been previously incarcerated, folks in the LGBTQ community. So all of those different people are experiencing hardships in different ways, and so kind of right place, right time.

EMILY BRIGHT: Yeah, absolutely. If people listening want to apply for these funds, what do they need to know?

TIFFANY Yeah. So to apply for the funds, you can go to Headwaters' website. And it's for various hardships. So a loss of income, medical bills, overdue bills, loss of housing support. We tried to keep that broad. You do have to provide some documentation with your application.

So a valid picture ID that is also a very broad spectrum, whether it be a state-issued driver's license or photo ID, a veteran ID card, a student ID. We just want to be able to verify your identification, obviously. And then you have to be willing to submit two verifiers. So two folks in community that can verify that you have ties to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and that you are a part of the larger Minnesota Community.

EMILY BRIGHT: Minnesota overall. Yes?

TIFFANY Yes. Yes.

DYKES:

EMILY BRIGHT: And so as we're coming through, have come through this surge of federal agents in recent months, I'm curious, Tiffany, what are you reflecting on in terms of what it takes to sustain this work that you're doing during these urgent moments and beyond?

TIFFANY Yeah. So it takes intentional community care. And so we don't do this work alone. And so that includes our

DYKES: partners, the larger community that we are engaging. So it's about building that structure out so that when all else fails, we can take care of each other. And that's what's really important for us as an organization. And so that really informs all that we do.

EMILY BRIGHT: OK. I know moving back, Black Visions played a major role in the push to replace the Minneapolis Police Department with a Department of Public Safety. And that proposal ultimately didn't get the support it needed to pass a citywide vote back in what? November 2021? So what has your work looked like since then?

TIFFANY Yeah. It's been a lot of political education. Even though we didn't win that ballot, we saw the support for that

DYKES: ballot as a win. We saw significant support, and so we wanted to build off of that. And so a lot of focus on community education, getting out here in community and supporting folks who are also in alignment with that movement. Trying to be more intentional and strategic about how we educate folks, when we educate them, and then rally them behind campaigns like the Yes on 2 campaign.

EMILY BRIGHT: And tell me more about that campaign.

TIFFANY Yes, that was the replacement to create the Department of Public Safety.

DYKES:

EMILY BRIGHT: And what is Black Visions focused on moving forward?

TIFFANY So we are focused on a number of things. And so we do general organizing around trying to work with

DYKES: community, create community-led solutions around environmental justice and public safety. We also have a membership program where we do some deeper leadership development with Black folks to build them up so that they can go back to their communities and organize around issues that are important to them.

And also, we are building out our space in advocacy and starting to look like what it looks like for us to be at the Capitol and to support bills that are direct alignment with our values and to see the support of the Black community here in Minnesota.

EMILY BRIGHT: I'd love to hear more about your environmental justice focus. What are you looking at with that?

TIFFANY Yeah. So right now, our focus is in partnership with the Zero Burn Coalition. And that is focused on closing down

DYKES: the HERC, the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center, which is located near North Minneapolis near the Twin Stadium. And all of those pollutants from burning trash are being sent over into North Minneapolis, negatively impacting the Black community there. And so we are really trying to hold Hennepin County accountable to the plan that they put in place to close the HERC by a certain date. And so that is the work that we're really pushing forward right now in environmental justice.

We also have an environmental justice fellowship that we are accepting applications for. And so that is to do some political education of young folks around environmental justice, get them out in community, and start to build their leadership skills around organizing.

EMILY BRIGHT: So I'm hearing lots of ways that people can connect with you, whether they're applying for some-- applying for grants or for some development to open up some opportunities in the future. And I understand you are looking to continue to redistribute some more of that money in the future as well.

TIFFANY Yes, we just started. We're redistributing another \$1.5 million over the course of the next two years. And I just
DYKES: wanted to correct-- I misspoke earlier about all of Minnesota for the fund. I'm sorry, it is all of Minnesota. I apologize, never mind. Got tongue tied.

EMILY BRIGHT: Oh my gosh, that absolutely happens. Well, I want to thank you for your time and talking with me. And just for people who are looking to apply for those funds, remind me, when's their deadline? When's that available?

TIFFANY The fund will be open until April 30.

DYKES:

EMILY BRIGHT: Tiffany, thank you for your time.

TIFFANY Thank you for having me.

DYKES:

EMILY BRIGHT: Tiffany Dykes is director of development at Black Visions.